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Follow-up to the recommendations of the Permanent Forum

Human rights

Information received from Governments

Republic of Burundi**

Summary

This document contains the responses of the Government of the Republic of Burundi to the questionnaire sent to Member States concerning the recommendations of the seventh session of the Permanent Forum.

* E/C.19/2009/1.
** This document was submitted late in order to include updated information.

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I. Introduction

1. The Government of Burundi is aware of the issue of vulnerable groups and has established support structures for them, including the Ministry of National Solidarity, Repatriation, National Reconstruction, Human Rights and Gender.

2. The Ministry has a National Solidarity Department which is responsible for providing assistance and protection for vulnerable groups such as orphans and other vulnerable children, persons with disabilities, widows, older persons, vulnerable Batwa and others. A Social Integration Department has also been established for that purpose.

3. The Burundi Batwa are an indigenous people as referred to by the United Nations in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

II. The Ministry's initiatives to support the Batwa

4. Five kinds of initiatives have been taken to support the Batwa community: (a) food and non-food assistance; (b) support for education and training; (c) support for housing construction; (d) support for revenue-generating activities; and (e) assistance with medical care.

A. Food and non-food assistance

5. The Ministry makes its contribution in the form of food (including beans, rice, oil and cassava or maize flour) and non-food (including second-hand clothing, fabric, plates and pans).

6. This initiative is carried out by the Ministry in collaboration with Unissons-nous pour la promotion des Batwa (UNIPROBA), in particular during visits to identify Batwa households and also during ceremonies to legalize marriages.

7. This support is also provided to Batwa households in response to requests addressed to the Ministry.

B. Support for education and training

8. The Ministry has provided exercise books and pens to UNIPROBA for Batwa pupils. It also supports job training centres which provide services to Batwa. In all provinces except Bubanza and Makamba, the Ministry also has family development centres which provide literacy training for adults, group mentoring, and educational, information and communication meetings on various subjects, including the Code of Persons and the Family, common law unions, divorce and witchcraft. The Batwa community is one of their target groups. The Government has also taken the welcome step of providing free primary school education.

C. Support for housing construction

9. The Ministry of National Solidarity, Repatriation, National Reconstruction, Human Rights and Gender provides roofing sheets on request to vulnerable Batwa households following the completion of wall construction.

10. The Ministry also takes vulnerable Batwa into account when allocating houses in the "peace villages".

D. Support for revenue-generating activities

11. The Ministry has a focal point who works with the Agriculture Rehabilitation Sustainable Land Management Supplement Project in the context of the pilot action plan for Batwa development. This project has the goal of conducting a participatory analysis of the Batwa community's needs in the target provinces (Muramvya, Ngozi and Bururi, at present) and raising community awareness in order to contribute to the preparation of socio-economic development activities planned for the period 2009-2010.

12. The Ministry also provides seeds to Batwa households requesting them. A microcredit system has been tested and vulnerable Batwa individuals have been beneficiaries.

E. Assistance with medical care

13. When the crisis began in 1993, the Government of Burundi set up an assistance system to provide medical care for returnees and displaced persons and other vulnerable groups. The Batwa were among the beneficiaries.

14. The Government's initiative to provide free health care for children under five years of age and for women giving birth has also alleviated the sufferings of vulnerable Batwa households.

15. The Council of Ministers has just adopted a national policy for orphans and other vulnerable children and its implementation will help to resolve some of the difficulties of Batwa children from vulnerable households. However, the Government of Burundi does not have laws, policies or other instruments specifically designed to address indigenous peoples' issues.